THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) So far as Coal India Limited (CIL) is concerned, all the subsidiary companies except Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL) and Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) are earning profit. These two loss making companies, *i.e.*, ECL and BCCL are having negative networth and have been declared sick by the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). Despite the above, CIL has been achieving more than its Annual Action Plan (AAP) target of production and off-take of coal over the year. It is a fact there is a demand-supply gap in coal availability in the country, though the nationalized coal companies are making continuous efforts to enhance production of coal.

Import of coal from other countries is being resorted to primarily for reasons of quality arising out of limited availability of superior grade coking and non-coking coal indigenously. Other major reasons for import of coal are environmental considerations and consideration of location specific landed cost as Indian Coal, in general, contains high ash content and requires haulage over long distances necessitating larger freight costs.

(c) and (d) CIL and its subsidiaries are in constant endeavour to improve their performance in the areas of production, productivity, welfare of employees etc. However, for ECL and BCCL, which have been referred to BIFR, two separate rehabilitation schemes for revival of these two subsidiaries have been submitted to BIFR. BIFR has already approved the revival plan of ECL. The Revival Plans for ECL and BCCL envisage positive net worth by 2008-09 and 2011-12 respectively.

Selling of coal by private parties

2232. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to allow private parties to sell coal in retail; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when it is likely to be finalized and implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) In order to increase coal production in the country and to attract private investment in coal mining sector, the Central Government has decided to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973.

Accordingly, the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill 2000 has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha in April, 2000 with the following objectives:

(i) To allow Indian companies *i.e.* companies registered in India, to mine coal and lignite without the existing restriction of captive consumption; and

(ii) to engage in exploration of coal and lignite resources in the country.

The Bill has been recommended by the Standing Committee on Energy for adoption. However, some trade unions have raised some objections which are under consideration by a Group of Ministers constituted to look into the problems of the coal industry. The recommendation of the GOM is awaited.

• Postal service in every Panchayat

†2233. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan for providing postal service in every Panchayat of country under which branch post-office, sub post-office or post-office would be set up;

(b) if so, by when it would be done, and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the numbers of such Gram Panchayats at present, specially in Himachal Pradesh, which still do not have postal service facilities and by when these facilities would be provided in these Panchayats?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Post offices are provided in those GP villages, which fulfil distance, population and income norms fixed for this purpose, subject to the availability of resources. Details of the norms are given in the Statement (*See* below). No time frame can be fixed in this regard since post offices can be provided only if norms are complied with.

(c) There are 608 out of 3037 GP villages, which currently do not have post office facilities. However all villages are being provided basic postal facilities like daily delivery of dak, collection of mail through letter boxes and sale of stamps and stationery at the doorstep. Post office

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.